Action Sheet: December 2021

We seek a world free of war and the threat of war

For the first time in 50 years, Congress is poised to repeal an authorization for war. This month, we will finish the work of repealing the 2002 Authorization for Use of Military Force in Iraq (AUMF). We will also signal to Congress that our focus next year will be to end the terrible war in Yemen.

Our advocacy is working: In a recent floor speech, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (NY) singled out 2002 Iraq AUMF repeal as the one amendment that should be included in the Senate version of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Four new senators have co-sponsored S.J. Res. 10 this month alone, and three additional Republican senators have stated their intent to vote for 2002 Iraq AUMF repeal. Our lobbyists expect the NDAA to be on the Senate floor in early December.

This month, thank the lawmakers who have supported repeal of the 2002 Iraq AUMF. We believe we have at least 60 supportive senators, and perhaps as many as 65. These “thank you” messages are also a strategic way to keep the issue on the Senate agenda.

We also ask that you let your members of Congress know through an email, a conversation, or a letter-to-the-editor that Congress must take a stand against U.S. support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen. Research how your legislators voted the last time Congress pressed for an end to U.S. support for the Saudi-led war, and tell your members that advocating for an end to this war is a next step towards reasserting constitutional authority over when our country goes to war.

Get the Facts: Ending the Endless Wars

The Constitution

The founders of the United States specifically placed the power to declare war in the hands of Congress. The 2001 and 2002 AUMFs have been interpreted by three presidents to give the executive branch the power to wage war without congressional approval.

The 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force

Three days after 9/11, Congress gave the president advance permission to use military force against anyone who planned, authorized, committed, or aided those attacks, or who harbored such groups. By the authorization’s own language, that should have only meant al Qaeda, who
were responsible for the attacks, and the Taliban, who harbored al Qaeda in Afghanistan.

But later, the Bush administration developed the concept of “associated forces” – a term that does not appear in the 2001 AUMF – which three administrations have now used to expand the war to more than half a dozen groups around the world that had no connection to the 9/11 attacks, including ISIS. This is not what Congress intended in 2001; ISIS didn’t even exist then. Congress didn’t intend to start wars against al-Shabaab in Somalia or al-Nusra in Syria, but that’s exactly what has happened.

**The 2002 Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq**

The 2002 Iraq AUMF authorized the 2003 invasion of Iraq to defend the United States against the threat of weapons of mass destruction possessed by the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq. The Trump administration claimed that the 2002 Iraq AUMF also authorizes war against ISIS in Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere, saying it allows the president to fight any threat “to or emanating from Iraq.” Indeed, in January 2020, the administration asserted that the 2002 Iraq AUMF authorized the assassination of Iranian general Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad. [Read more.]

**Bipartisan Support Exists**

Congress has twice voted to end U.S. military engagements abroad: first in April 2019, to end U.S. involvement in the Saudi-led war in Yemen, and second in April 2020, to terminate hostilities against Iran following the General Soleimani strike. The House has voted three times, in 2019, 2020 and 2021, to repeal the 2002 Iraq AUMF. All these votes have been on a bipartisan basis. These actions demonstrate that there is bipartisan will in Congress to rein in presidential power and ever-expanding wars.

**War Is Not the Answer.**

More war has not brought more peace. After nearly two decades of war, it is long past time for Congress to acknowledge that U.S. war policies have contributed to more instability and violence. They have failed to reduce the threat of terrorism or keep Americans safe. The world only becomes a safer place when lawmakers engage in robust debate prior to authorizing any military attacks, when we invest in peacebuilding, diplomacy, and other measures to prevent violent conflict, and when we learn lessons from our actions and reflect on what it means to truly protect American security.

» Take Action

Urge your senators to tell Senate leadership to bring S.J. Res. 10, Sens. Tim Kaine (VA) and Todd Young’s (IN) bill to repeal the 1991 and 2002 Iraq AUMF, to a vote.

In December:

- Call on your senators to pass 2002 Iraq AUMF repeal before the end of the year. Thank your senators publicly if they have supported repeal.

- Reach out to your contacts in each congressional office to let them know that we will be lobbying to end U.S. support for the war in Yemen in January. This is a great time to get a head start by requesting a meeting in the new year!